VI. CENTER OPERATIONS: RESIDENTIAL LIVING AND HEALTH SERVICES

Except for the time spent in academic education and vocational training, center life is governed by the residential living component of Job Corps. Residential living encompasses a wide range of program elements, including new student orientation, residential support services, counseling, social skills development, evaluation of student progress, intergroup relations, recreation, student government and leadership, and behavior management. A closely related component of center life is the provision of health services.

All centers undertake pre-orientation and orientation activities to help new students adjust to center life. Pre-orientation activities are geared toward ensuring that the new student has as much information as possible about what to expect. Orientation services are geared toward making the student feel welcome, fully informing the student about program expectations and services, and integrating the new student into the center community.

Residential living support services are an integral element of the Job Corps model. They are essential to ensuring a secure, attractive physical and social environment at a center that promotes student achievement. Residential advisors (RAs) are central to the residential living support services. They help students adjust to center life, support them in all aspects of their Job Corps experiences, and take responsibility for ensuring their accountability.

Counseling services play a vital role in the operation of a Job Corps center. Every center must maintain a structured counseling program that includes educational guidance; vocational, personal, sexuality, drug/alcohol, and placement counseling; family planning; social skills development; and evaluation of students' progress. Counseling services staff maintain students' personal and social development records and often serve as a coordinating point for both students and other staff.

To promote positive, socially acceptable behaviors among students, each center must conduct a structured social skills training (SST) program, using a prescribed curriculum. This curriculum includes 50 social skills and a Social Training Achievement Record (STAR) to record students' progress and performance, in addition to manuals and handbooks for both staff and students. All students must participate in and successfully complete all SST program units. After completing the SST program, students must participate in ongoing center activities to reinforce and practice their skills.

One of the most important elements of the residential living component is the evaluation of student progress. Each center must implement a "maximum benefits system" through the establishment of Progress/Performance Evaluation Panels (P/PEPs), to ensure that each student reaches maximum potential in the program. This system must take into account each student's specific educational, vocational, and social needs. The P/PEP, which must consist of the student, his or her counselor, an education instructor, a vocational instructor, and an RA or SST facilitator, is usually chaired by the counselor. Evaluations are scheduled to take place between 30 and 45 days after enrollment and every 60 enrollment days thereafter. The P/PEP assesses a student's progress in academic education, vocational training, residential living, and the SST program and sets goals to be met by the next P/PEP meeting. In addition, the P/PEP makes recommendations to the center director on changes in the student's program, readiness for entry into the exit program, and the award of any performance bonuses.

Job Corps has developed a structured intergroup relations (IGR) program to reduce prejudice, prevent discriminatory behavior by staff and students, and increase understanding among racial/ethnic groups and between men and women. Each center must adopt the IGR program guide, which specifies the components of a three-phase IGR program. Phase I is taught during the

orientation process. Phase II is incorporated into the cultural-awareness element of the academic educational program and is taught during the class day. Phase III is an ongoing program, planned and carried out by an IGR committee of staff and students, that enables students to apply the concepts learned in earlier phases. It consists primarily of a schedule of events and activities, with at least one event or activity required in every calendar month.

The recreation/avocation program provided at centers is believed to have a strong impact on center life and student achievement. Centers must provide recreational opportunities after class hours and on weekends and holidays. These include cultural events, physical education, group and individual sports, arts and crafts, community activities, reading resource facilities and materials, and movies or other special events. The recreation/avocation staff, with student input, must plan and prepare both a seasonal calendar of activities and a weekly calendar of events based on periodic assessments of student needs and preferences.

Because student input into the program is so important, centers must provide a structured student leadership training program and must establish an elected student government. The leadership training program must have a defined course of study, covering the objectives of Job Corps, principles of leadership and human relations, and continuing in-service training for elected leaders. The student government must have significant advisory responsibilities in planning and implementing the residential living component, including establishment and operation of a Student Welfare Association that oversees the operation and accounting of on-center concessions and other revenue sources.

All centers must develop a set of reasonable rules and regulations to govern student conduct. The center director is responsible for their development, with significant advisory input from the elected student government. In addition to rules for on- and off-center behavior, these rules and

regulations must include a disciplinary system, a center review board, an appeals procedure, and sanctions.

Finally, all centers must provide a health program (medical, dental, and mental health) for all students from admission until termination from the Job Corps program. In addition to routine health services, the health program must include a daily sick call or open appointment system with necessary specialist referrals, written arrangements for off-center inpatient care, and ready access to emergency services on a 24-hour basis.

Each of these program elements is described in more detail below.

A. ORIENTATION OF NEW STUDENTS

The decision to enroll in Job Corps is a major one for young people who are found eligible for the program. Being away from home and neighborhood, living in close quarters with strangers (many of whom come from different places and have diverse ethnic or religious backgrounds), conforming to the structure and regimentation of center life--all these factors demand growth and adjustment of the new Job Corps student. Recognizing how difficult and stressful the transition to center life can be for new students, the Job Corps program has created program elements designed specifically to help the new student make the necessary adjustments.

One of these program elements is guided tours of the center. Nearly all centers offer regular tours (Table VI.1), which prospective students and their parents are encouraged to take. Over half (56 percent) offer tours at least once a week, and another 28 percent offer them once or twice a month. Less than 1 percent (one center) reported not offering any tours. Tours are provided more frequently in significantly nonresidential centers and less frequently at Civilian Conservation Centers (CCCs), which would be expected from the size and locations of the two kinds of centers. Center

TABLE VI.1

ORIENTATION ACTIVITIES
(Percentage of Centers)

	Overall	CCC	Primarily Residential	Significantly Nonresidential
Frequency of Tours				
At least once a week	56	30	57	81
Once or twice a week	28	43	26	15
Once every few months	10	17	17	0
Response to Students Uncertain About Enrolling Staff usually…				
Encourage student	31	36		
Discourage student	19	18		
Neither encourage nor discourage student	50	46		

SOURCE: National Job Corps Study Center Mail Survey.

tours are also more common at centers that have some involvement in outreach and admissions (OA) activities.

Other critical elements designed to help students become acquainted with Job Corps and adjust to center life are pre-orientation and orientation programs. Pre-orientation activities are directed at students before they arrive on center. Orientation activities are geared toward students in their first few days or weeks on center.

1. Pre-Orientation

Pre-orientation occurs after a student has been assigned to a center but before the student arrives. It is the first direct contact that center staff have with the prospective student. Until this point, most students have received information about the center from OA staff or through word of mouth. Pre-orientation offers the center an opportunity to give the student additional information, find out more about the student, and set the tone for future interactions. Pre-orientation programs must be approved by and are monitored by the regional offices.

The primary activities of pre-orientation programs are pre-arrival informational letters and phone calls. Mail survey data show that most centers (93 percent) contact prospective students by both mail and telephone. Only a few rely solely on letters (3 percent) or phone calls (5 percent). Most centers also encourage prospective students to visit the center for a tour, but tours are not practical for many students who live far away.

Pre-arrival letters provide additional information about the center and its location, the vocational and educational options available to the students, and the rules and regulations that guide center life. Letters also provide information about transportation and orientation and what to bring and not to bring to the center. The tone of these form letters varies from positive and encouraging to a more heavy-handed emphasis on rules and expectations. Most exhibit a blend of the two approaches.

Pre-arrival telephone calls to prospective students are typically initiated by counseling or orientation staff. Although the topics covered during these calls are usually the same as those addressed in the letter, the telephone contact provides an opportunity for two-way exchange. Students can ask questions about the center, and staff can learn about students' interests or medical, educational, or legal histories.

Centers generally feel that pre-orientation contact with students, especially by telephone, is an important part of the orientation program. The information sharing that occurs at this time helps students arrive at the center with a realistic understanding of the program and its expectations and helps the centers anticipate any special needs or problems that will have to be addressed. The pre-arrival contacts are used by centers to:

- Review center rules and expectations
- Inform the prospective student of the zero-tolerance policy and other guidelines
- Supplement (or correct as necessary) information provided by outreach staff
- Discuss the student's vocational trade interests and applicable waiting list
- Assess the prospective student's commitment to Job Corps

Assessing Student Commitment. As discussed in Chapter III, OA counselors follow several practices to assess the capability, aspirations, motivations, and commitment of applicants. To varying degrees, centers use the pre-arrival phone contacts to assess applicants' commitment and suitability for Job Corps. Respondents to the center survey were asked to indicate their staff's typical response to a prospective student who expresses uncertainty about whether to enroll (Table VI.1). At half the centers, staff usually try to answer all the youth's questions during the pre-arrival phone call and neither encourage the youth to enter nor discourage the youth from entering the center. At

just less than one-third of the centers (31 percent), staff usually encourage youths to enroll, while staff at the remaining centers (19 percent) usually tell youths not to come until they are certain of their decision. These differences in center practices likely reflect differences in their philosophy of student recruitment, with those that discourage uncertain youth essentially screening to enroll only students who are committed and who will persevere in the program.

2. Orientation

Orientation programs are designed to make new students feel welcome, introduce them to the Job Corps program and center life, and assess their capabilities and interests for appropriate placement in academic and vocational programs. The importance that centers place on this period of adjustment is evident from the fact that students are generally asked to wait and enroll at the next orientation if more than one day is going to be missed. If students are late and miss a small portion of the orientation session, centers help them catch up.

Most centers admit new students every week. Eighty percent of all centers conduct new student intake activities on a weekly basis, and nearly all others (except one) conduct new student intake at least every other week. The number of students arriving during each intake period depends on both the size of the center and the weekly termination rate. Centers plan arrivals based on the number of students they expect to be leaving each week through the normal exit phase of the program. This ranges from as few as 6 to as many as 70 or more in some large centers. Generally, centers are replacing 3 to 4 percent of their students at each new intake. For large centers, the job of accommodating a high volume of new students can be a challenge.

Meeting New Students. Centers vary greatly in their approaches to welcoming students when they first arrive. At a number of centers, the orientation staff is on hand to greet students, but several use security staff instead of or in addition to orientation personnel. These generally are the centers

where students are required to pass through security to gain access. A few centers mentioned using current students to greet incoming students. Centers typically send their own transportation staff or dorm staff to meet students at the bus station or the airport.

Intake Interviews. One of the first activities that students participate in upon arrival at a Job Corps center is an intake interview, usually a one-on-one session with a counselor. Counselors use the intake process as an opportunity to assess whether the students are at risk of leaving the program and to learn their fears, answer their questions, and help orient them. One center we visited reported using a separate orientation counselor for this interview, but the norm is to assign each counselor a group of new students in addition to the ongoing caseload. Counseling assignments are usually based on dorm residence but may be based on vocation; some centers assign students to dorms by vocation, so sometimes these two approaches are equivalent.

The one-on-one intake interviews range in duration across centers, from a few minutes to an hour or more. At one extreme is a center where counselors routinely spend two hours with each student; at the other are those that report that counselors spend only 15 minutes per student. Almost half the centers (41 percent) fall somewhere in the middle, devoting 30 to 45 minutes to the intake interview.

Orientation Schedule. Once students arrive and complete their intake interview, a formal orientation program begins. Orientation typically lasts two weeks at most centers, although shorter orientation periods are sometimes encountered in rural CCCs. In a typical two-week session, the first week is occupied with activities designed to help the student become familiar with and adjust to life on center, and the second week is focused on the occupational exploration program (OEP). As described in Chapter IV, the OEP introduces students to the vocational choices available on center.

A typical first week of orientation is highly structured. Students move from activity to required activity from breakfast through dinner. Structured activities, such as community tours, recreational events, and dorm meetings, are also offered during free time on evenings and weekends. Staff commented that a busy schedule helps to decrease levels of homesickness, a common problem among new students.

Orientation Content. During the first day of orientation, a heavy emphasis is placed on rules, discipline structures, and zero tolerance. Only a few centers indicated that they emphasize motivational messages related to goal setting, opportunities, and achievement at the outset. Most structured orientation time during the rest of the first week is devoted to staff presentations, tours of the facility, testing, and other intake activities, such as filling out forms. Almost half the centers also emphasize special recreational or social activities (special meals, parties, recreational outings) as an important component of orientation, because these activities help students adjust to their new environment. During our site visits, some staff especially stressed the importance of having fun activities for students during this period. Only one staff member mentioned counseling activities as an important part of the adjustment process. In contrast, many counselors described themselves as playing an active role in the orientation process, leading activities specifically designed to foster adjustment.

Orientation Staffing. In accordance with national guidelines, centers involve a range of staff in the orientation process, with representatives from the various components (academic, vocational, recreation) introducing that component to new students. The orientation coordinator's role varies across sites. At many sites, the coordinator is concerned primarily with planning, scheduling, and carrying out activities, including transporting students. At other sites, the coordinator also monitors the adjustment of individual students.

Student Roles. Students play a major role in orientation at most centers. Student "big brothers" or "big sisters" are generally assigned to incoming students to act as guides and mentors during their first week or two at the center. At many centers, peer involvement appears confined to informal pairing of new students with older students. However, a few centers mentioned specific, structured involvement of older students who greet incoming students, give tours, and participate in discussion groups. Several centers especially emphasized the use of students as an important element of orientation to help students feel more relaxed and comfortable and to provide positive, successful role models.

Successful Elements. From our discussions with center staff, it appears that the elements of the orientation program that are especially helpful for new students include:

- Pre-orientation program, especially the telephone contact, to help students know what to expect and to help the center anticipate special needs or problems
- Use of student peers to help students feel relaxed and to provide positive role models
- Special, fun activities to engage students and help them feel more comfortable with each other and with staff
- High degree of structure that keeps students busy and engaged

Focus groups with new students highlighted the difficulty that students have adapting to life in Job Corps in the first few days and weeks. Adjusting to the high degree of structure and control the center exerts and to the lack of privacy can be difficult for new students. Difficulties adjusting are especially pronounced among younger students (ages 16 and 17). The success of the orientation program is seen as closely linked to student retention. A common theme in the interviews was the need to improve OA practices so that staff must contend with fewer misconceptions about the program during orientation.

3. Orientation Housing

Centers take varied approaches to housing new students during the orientation period. Most centers (about 58 percent) integrate new students with the longer-term residents, assigning them to their permanent dormitories immediately upon arrival. Other centers place new students in temporary quarters with other new students, either in separate orientation dorms or in rooms or floors reserved for new students.

Those centers that house new students separately feel that doing so reduces their fears about safety and eases their adjustment to center life. Those that choose to integrate new students right from the beginning did not comment on the relative merits of this approach. One center had a pilot program to house new female students in a separate orientation dorm to see if female retention would improve. It was too early in the pilot at the time of our visit to determine if the change was having the desired effect.

B. RESIDENTIAL SUPPORT

Residential living support services are an important part of the Job Corps model. They are essential to ensuring a secure, attractive physical and social environment that promotes student achievement. Residential students are housed in dormitories. The primary staff with whom students come into contact in this setting, and who support students in all aspects of their Job Corps experiences, are the RAs and, to a lesser extent, the counselors. This section describes the typical residential facility and the roles and responsibilities of the RAs. It also provides a description of the support services provided to the sizable minority of Job Corps students who are nonresidential and the child care programs available to parenting students (nonresidential and residential) at some centers. The counseling program is addressed in the following section.

1. Dormitory Facilities

Residential students are housed in dormitories that provide bathing and toilet facilities, space to store personal belongings, and common areas for relaxing and doing laundry. The typical Job Corps center has four or five dormitories, with an average total capacity of about 350 students. Students generally share a dormitory room with three to five other students (Table VI.2), and they often find the transition to group living difficult. As shown, larger room capacities are common at CCCs, but most rooms are small and lack privacy. A typical arrangement we observed was a set of bunk beds and lockers to store personal belongings. Table VI.2 shows the dormitory facilities, including bathrooms, laundry, and student lounges, that are shared by many students. On average, about 20 students share a bathroom, 80 share laundry facilities, and 50 share a common lounge area. More students are typically assigned to each bathroom and laundry facility at CCCs. Females tend to have fewer roommates and lower ratios of students per bathroom and shower facility. Most dormitories maintain separate housing areas for males and females, although a minority of dormitories are coeducational, with males and females housed in separate areas. Student assignment is generally based on gender and availability but vocational choice also affects assignment at a few centers.

During our on-site visits, the quality of the bedrooms and bathrooms and the amount of personal space were cited as important dimensions of satisfaction with residential facilities. Many staff commented, and our observations confirmed, that these are areas frequently in need of improvement. Upgrading dormitory facilities was a commonly voiced strategy for improving student retention, especially for females.

Special Facilities. A few centers offer special accommodations for select populations of students. These include single-parent housing and married-student housing.

TABLE VI.2

RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES

	Overall	CCC	Primarily Residential	Significantly Nonresidential
Students by Dorm Room Capacity (Mean Percentage of Students)				
1 to 2	16	7	22	14
3 to 5	49	31	57	53
6 to 8	26	41	17	30
9 to 10	5	13	2	1
More than 10	5	8	3	3
Students Sharing Common Facilities (Mean Number of Students)				
Bathroom/Shower	23	30	22	18
Laundry	83	88	76	94
Lounge	49	47	52	48

SOURCE: National Job Corps Study Center Mail Survey.

2. Residential Advisors (RAs)

RAs supervise students in the dormitories, which are staffed at all hours, though the late afternoon and evening shift naturally has the most contact with students and as a consequence is the most heavily staffed. Many managers view these "prime-time" RAs as the backbone of center residential life. They are the closest adult figure on center to a parent or guardian and thus serve as important role models for the students. The relationships that the students develop with RAs are therefore very important in shaping student behavior. While recognizing the importance of the RA position, most managers also acknowledge that this pivotal position suffers from low wages and high turnover. Many centers rely heavily on temporary staff to fill gaps created by turnover of RAs. These employment conditions suggest a basic inconsistency between programmatic goals and personnel practices related to residential living.

RAs have a broad and varied set of responsibilities that include student supervision, dorm governance, group discussions, informal counseling, SST, student performance evaluations, and a range of accounting and paperwork tasks. These are described in greater detail below.

Student Supervision. RAs make sure the dormitories are clean and safe and that students are behaving appropriately. They assign and supervise students in the task of cleaning their rooms and common living areas. They typically use student assistants to help manage the dorms and to assist with new students. RAs are also responsible for student discipline.

Dorm Meetings and Informal Discussion Groups. These are usually regularly scheduled weekly activities to address dorm issues or problems that have arisen. Special group sessions can be conducted on personal hygiene, relationships, or basic housekeeping skills. At some centers, these events are scheduled several times a week, while at others they occur weekly or less often.

Informal Counseling. Because of their proximity to the students and the leadership function they perform, RAs frequently engage in informal counseling. They identify and assist students who are having trouble adjusting to the center, and they listen to and support students having family or interpersonal problems. Students who are observed to be having unusual difficulties adjusting to center life are referred to counseling.

Social Skills Training (SST) Groups. At most centers, RAs facilitate SST groups for the residential students after class or in the evenings. About three-quarters of the RAs interviewed reported that they had received some SST training prior to leading sessions, either from other center staff or from written and video materials.

P/PEPs. RAs provide input in the pre-panel meetings and are present and contribute to the panel meetings at most centers. Those centers adopting a P/PEC model continue to involve RAs in the preliminary meetings but not directly in the P/PEC session. As with SSTs and dormitory meetings, the RAs who perform this function work the prime-time shift.

Administrative Paperwork. For each student, RAs keep files that typically contain the STAR report, P/PEPs, SST log, incident reports, results of the dorm court or disciplinary actions taken, property inventories, injury reports, counseling records, leave reports, locker checks, and an anecdotal log. They also keep a daily log of events on their shift to communicate with staff working the next shift.

3. Nonresidential Support Services

During our site visits, staff stressed the importance of the residential component of the Job Corps program. Residential life is seen as central to helping resocialize students. Some staff believe that it is even more important than vocational training for the future of the students. However, staff centrally involved in nonresidential components of the program note that a different student is

reached through this part of Job Corps. These are students who most likely would not enroll in Job Corps if a nonresidential option were not available, because of outside commitments to their families or children.

Approximately one-quarter of all Job Corps centers have a nonresidential component that is "significant," defined as 20 percent or more of all slots reserved for nonresidents. In these centers, nonresidential students are fully integrated into the academic and vocational components of the Job Corps program, but their experiences and participation in other aspects of center life are quite distinct. The key differences are described below.

Dedicated Counselors. At most centers, dedicated counselors are assigned to nonresidential students. They provide a variety of services to these students that residential students would receive from both counselors and RAs. These include counseling and SST services. At a minority of centers, the same counselors serve both residential and nonresidential students. However, even in these centers, the nonresidential students typically do not participate in SST or group counseling with residential students. Nonresidential students are viewed as requiring a greater level of counseling services, mainly because Job Corps has less control over the environment of this group. Nonresidential students often seek counseling services because of housing problems or other difficulties at home.

Transportation. Daily transportation to the center can be a major obstacle for nonresidential students. Job Corps students are often dependent upon public transportation or the assistance of family or friends. Some students told us that they had to travel over an hour each way and use bus transfers to get to and from the center. Centers that are well served by public transportation pose the fewest challenges for students. A small minority of centers provide transportation for nonresidential students.

Recreational Activities and Special Events. Nonresidential students are less likely to participate in recreational activities, student government, or special events that occur outside class. Many of them have either children at home or outside employment obligations that make it difficult for them to remain on center after hours to participate in center activities. Transportation at later hours of the day or evening can also represent a major obstacle to after-hours activities. Staff expressed a desire to provide transportation to students in these situations but did not feel that adequate resources were available to permit this. As a result, nonresidential students do not tend to be well integrated into student life on center.

Child Care. Students who are also parents face unique challenges in Job Corps. These students spend time with their children while not engaged in Job Corps activities, and they must arrange for the care of their children while at Job Corps. Some centers offer child care on site, but many others require that students find their own resources in the community. Even if child care is available on center, nonresidential students must arrange for backup care or miss classes if their child is sick. Centers with a significant proportion of nonresidential students expressed a strong interest in establishing an on-site child care center if they did not already have one.

Outside Commitments and Influences. Residential students are removed from their home environment and are relieved from many of the commitments they might have had if they had remained at home. Nonresidential students, in contrast, maintain strong ties and links to home and often have substantial commitments and obligations during the hours that they do not attend Job Corps. Outside commitments often include family obligations and jobs. In addition, the negative home or neighborhood influences that contributed to their need for the training and social development offered by Job Corps remain present for them. For all these reasons, nonresidential students tend to have greater problems with attendance and retention. On the other hand, students

who successfully meet the challenges of their home environment and remain committed to the program may find it easier to transition out of the program after graduation. During our site visits, we encountered many nonresidential students who were highly committed and were successfully meeting the challenges both in Job Corps and outside.

Behavior Management System. Managers report fewer disciplinary problems with nonresidential students, because the time they spend on center is shorter and more structured. Therefore, there is less need to have a behavior management system. However, when a problem does occur, the sanctions and incentives that make up the Job Corps behavior management system are not as effective for nonresidential students. This is because nonresidential students do not participate in many of the activities (such as off-center fieldtrips) that are used as incentives, or as privileges that are denied, to achieve behavioral goals.

Participation Expectations. Residential students perceive that nonresidential students are not held to the same standards. They are not required to do the same level of chores and have different attendance requirements. One center we visited had recently started requiring nonresidential students to participate in chores, which had apparently served to ease those tensions.

Prime-Time Program. In 1987, Job Corps began a pilot program to see if an evening (or prime-time) program would better serve the needs of female students who have children and have dropped out of school in the surrounding communities. Only one prime-time program is still in existence. This program currently has a capacity of 55 students--50 females and 5 males--a modest increase over its original size, and was operating over capacity (at 66 students) at the time of our site visit. The admissions process for this program is the same as for other students, although recruitment is necessarily local. When asked about the advantage of evening over daytime nonresidential programs, officials noted improved attendance. This was attributed to evening hours

being less likely to conflict with other appointments or with the care of sick children and to the direct provision of transportation and child care to students enrolled in this program.

4. Child Care

Most Job Corps centers do not provide child care for the children of enrolled students. Child care programs are currently available at 19 centers (18 percent) nationally (Table VI.3). All the centers providing child care are non-CCCs, and most are located in or near urban centers, where a larger than average percentage of students are nonresidential. As described below, Job Corps centers support three types of child care arrangements, of which two are designed to accommodate nonresidential students and one to serve residential students.

Nonresidential Programs Using Local Resources and Funding. This is the most common type of child care arrangement found on Job Corps centers. These programs operate through the establishment of linkages with state human resources or welfare departments, school systems, JTPA, JOBS, Head Start, or locally available low-cost programs. Seventeen centers provide child care during the day using this model. One additional center uses this model to support its prime-time program.

Nonresidential Programs Using Job Corps Funds. Two centers nationally are supported by Job Corps funds. These centers provide child care during the day for nonresidential students attending Job Corps.

Residential Single-Parent Programs. At these centers, special dormitory facilities are provided for residential students who are also mothers, allowing the young children to live with their mothers and participate in a day care program during the day while their mothers are engaged in classroom activities. This arrangement is available at six centers nationally.

TABLE VI.3

CHILD CARE PROVISION AND UTILIZATION
(Percentage of Centers)

	Overall	CCC	Primarily Residential	Significantly Nonresidential
Child Care Capacity				
None	83	100	78	73
45 or Fewer Slots	13	0	14	19
46 to 65 Slots	5	0	6	8
Utilization of Child Care Slots (Percentage)				
50 or less	32	NA	33	29
50 to 75	21	NA	25	14
76 to 100	47	NA	42	57

SOURCE: National Job Corps Study Center Mail Survey.

NA = not applicable.

Where child care facilities are available, they generally operate close to capacity (Table VI.3). Child care programs operating on center that are not at full capacity are permitted to enroll children of staff members and, if room is still available, children from the surrounding community. At centers that participated in the site visits, there was evidence that staff do take advantage of this opportunity.

Child care programs have been developed primarily to serve women who have young children and would otherwise be prevented from enrolling or would be more likely to drop out. During the site visits, centers that offer child care expressed satisfaction with their program and with their ability to serve this population of women. Staff at centers that served a large proportion of nonresidential students and that did not offer child care expressed an interest in having a program.

C. COUNSELING

Counseling services play a vital role in the operation of a Job Corp center for both residential and nonresidential students. All Job Corps centers provide students with a variety of counseling services, including educational guidance; vocational, personal, sexuality, drug/alcohol and placement counseling; family planning; social skills development; and evaluation of student progress. This section describes the primary duties of the counseling staff, the methods used to assign counselors, and the strengths and weaknesses of the program as perceived by the counseling staff.

1. Counselor Duties

The counseling role encompasses personal and therapeutic counseling, substance abuse and sexuality counseling, and academic and vocational advising. Counselors also are pivotal in monitoring student progress. Counselors lead or participate in a broad range of activities to meet these program requirements.

Student Orientation and Adjustment. Counselors conduct an initial intake interview with new students during the first week of orientation. They learn about students' goals and concerns and assess whether students are at risk of leaving the program. Students commonly find it difficult to adjust to group living with others who come from disparate backgrounds. The highly structured environment they encounter at Job Corps is also unfamiliar and poses adjustment problems. Homesickness is common. Counseling, both individual and in small groups, is provided for all new students, with extra services available for students at risk of leaving. Counselors are responsible for bringing to the attention of other staff those students who require extra services and to coordinate the delivery of those services.

Individual Counseling. A major portion of a counselor's time is taken up with individual counseling. A typical counseling schedule comprises a mix of scheduled appointments, arranged as part of a regular monthly meeting or upon referral from another staff member, and walk-in appointments either during open office hours or in response to a specific issue or crisis.

Small Group Counseling. Small group sessions are used, primarily with new students, to address common adjustment issues. Topics include conflict resolution, anger management, stress management, homesickness, pregnancy prevention, and sexual harassment. Group sessions provide an opportunity for students to ask questions and review center rules, to meet and form social connections with other students, to discuss fears and adjustment issues, and to vent frustrations. Counselors also view orientation groups as another opportunity to observe each new student in a social context and assess whether anyone needs additional services or support to adjust adequately to center life. Many counseling programs also include an optional small group counseling component that covers topics such as sexuality and pregnancy, anger management, victims of abuse, and support groups for men and women, gays and lesbians, and students of color.

Goal Setting. Counselors help students with their academic and vocational goal-setting in a formal way through their role in preparing an employability development plan (EDP), and informally through the scheduled counseling sessions. Counselors also approve vocational training course changes.

P/PEPs and P/PECs. Counselors play a major role in monitoring student progress in the Job Corps program. At almost all centers, counselors chair the P/PEP sessions and review with the students the evaluations provided by the other panel members. At the centers that have adopted a P/PEC model, counselors meet one-on-one with students to review their progress. Additional information concerning these models for monitoring student progress is provided in Section E.

Student Advocates. When students encounter difficulties with their training or social adjustment, counselors are often the staff members who try to resolve the situation. They also serve as advocates for the students in their dealings with court systems, welfare agencies, and their families. However, both students and counselors reported some dissatisfaction. For example, in the focus groups, students expressed a lack of close and positive relationships with noninstructional staff, especially counselors and RAs. Many students saw counselors as too busy or under too much stress to be interested in the individual student. Some also expressed a lack of trust in counselors and were concerned that discussions would not be kept confidential. Although these complaints are not uncommon in interactions between youth and counselors, counselors themselves were sometimes critical of their own performance. Many counselors felt that their caseloads were too large. Others were critical of counselors who appeared to organize their schedules around their own interests rather than those of the students.

Staff Training. Counselors provide in-house training for other staff in a number of areas. They are required to provide SST to staff, but they also train them in their individual areas of specialty,

such as counseling techniques, suicide prevention, crisis intervention, and equal employment opportunity.

Paperwork. Counselors complete paperwork for student leaves and travel, graduation or transfer to another program, and unexcused absences from the center. Counselors reported that tracking students who are absent from the center without permission is very burdensome. Several counselors expressed dissatisfaction with the required paperwork, estimating that it occupies from one-third to one-half of their time.

2. Assignment of Counselors

Counselors are typically assigned a caseload of students by vocation or by dormitory. Some centers have a specific orientation counselor to work with new students, while at others, counselors add new students to their existing caseload and continue to work with them throughout their time at the center. Most centers assign nonresidential students to designated counselors who may serve only nonresidential students or a combination of residential and nonresidential students.

There is wide variation across centers in the location of counseling services and the hours that services are available. At some centers, counselors have offices in the dormitories; at others, counseling services are centralized. At some centers, counselors work a standard day shift, whereas at others, they mix day and evening shifts. During one interview, a counselor expressed concern about students' access to counseling services because so little of the time that counseling is available falls when students are not in class. This counselor had asked to work on Saturdays and found that doing so helped him reach students at a time when they had greater need for services and more time to reflect on and address issues that were troubling them.

The size of a typical counseling caseload varies a great deal across centers. Most counselors we interviewed described their caseload as consisting of from 60 to 85 students, although caseloads of

as few as 25 and as many as 113 were reported. In general, caseloads for nonresidential students are smaller. This finding is consistent with counselors' statements that nonresidential students typically have a greater need for counseling services.

Forty percent of all counselors we interviewed felt that their caseloads are too large and prevent them from providing effective, individualized counseling to all students. While almost all counselors reported fulfilling the minimum counseling contact requirements (one contact per student per month), many perceived an unmet need for additional counseling services.

3. Strengths and Weaknesses of Counseling Program

Counselors offered their impressions of the strengths and weaknesses of the counseling program. Their assessment of what works and what needs improvement includes the following elements:

- ***Early focus on and identification of at-risk students is a strength of the program.*** Most interviewees emphasized the importance of the counselors' early identification of at-risk students, either through intake procedures or through regular staff meetings focusing on student adjustment and retention. Successful strategies include increasing one-on-one or group counseling sessions, working with RAs to develop an "action plan" for the student, and peer monitoring. An underlying theme that emerged from these various strategies was the importance of connecting at-risk students to center activities and to positive peers. Several staff indicated that these strategies were in place prior to the introduction of the 30-day probationary-period policy, while others indicated that the change in policy had increased their attention to at-risk students during the first days and weeks on center.

- ***Small group orientation counseling contributes to student adjustment.*** Counselors view these group sessions as an opportunity to meet and form social connections, to discuss fears and adjustment issues, and to share frustrations with peers.

- ***Smaller caseloads would increase counselors' ability to provide effective, individualized counseling services.*** This was a consistent theme for counselors whose caseloads were around 70 students or larger.

- ***Extensive paperwork requirements interfere with counselors' ability to provide students with direct services.*** Those counselors who identified this as a problem estimated that they spend at least a third of their time on paperwork.

D. SOCIAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Students enter Job Corps with a wide range of social skills. According to staff, the skills that are most often lacking among new students are:

- Responding appropriately to aggression and rumors
- Communicating and listening
- Personal hygiene
- Punctuality and attendance
- Consideration and respect (of both self and others)
- Respecting diversity
- Problem-solving
- Asking for help
- Basic manners (including appropriate language)

Developing social skills is an important part of the Job Corps student's experience, and Job Corps has developed an SST curriculum to address this area. To the question of how long a student with minimal social skills needs to be in the program before showing a noticeable improvement in behavior and social abilities, the average response was three months. However, the range of responses was very broad.

The curriculum has recently been revised in response to criticism from a variety of sources and to the recent focus on school-to-work. However, the new curriculum was not yet in place at the time of this study. Therefore, the observations and commentary provided next reflect the program as implemented in 1996. A brief summary of some of the salient features of the curriculum reform is provided at the end of this section.

1. Curriculum and Instructional Practices

Participation in the SST program is mandatory. The SST curriculum has 50 lessons. Centers are required to use the established curriculum but are encouraged to supplement the base curriculum with additional materials approved by the center director. The lessons address topics such as "asking permission," "being left out," "teasing," and "honesty and accusation." Student progress through the lessons is recorded in a STAR, which is included in the student's overall performance assessment.

Social skills are taught in small groups, typically by an RA (94 percent). Counselors facilitate the SST sessions for nonresidential students. Sessions are generally held on a weekly basis (96 percent) and typically last one hour (83 percent), although a few centers reported longer (12 percent) or shorter (4 percent) sessions. In practice, we observed that sessions are often cut short when students appear bored and restless (or listless).

Students generally remain in SST until they leave Job Corps (89 percent) and receive sanctions for failure to attend (98 percent) (Table VI.4). Penalties are sometimes minimal (22 percent), such as repeating a lesson or receiving a verbal warning, but are more often of greater consequence (60 percent), such as a written incident report, a fine, a counseling referral, or a dorm court referral. At a small number of centers (2 percent), the consequences of missing an SST session are severe, such as a loss of privileges. Some centers have adopted an incremental approach (15 percent) whereby each absence is subjected to an increasingly severe penalty. CCCs more consistently apply intermediate penalties.

SST sessions are usually conducted in a lounge or similar setting in the dormitories (for residential students), after classes have ended for the day. However, there are some striking exceptions. One center we visited holds many of its sessions during the training day in the context of a vocational class. The session we observed involved staff from a variety of programmatic areas

TABLE VI.4

ATTENDANCE AT SST SESSIONS AND PENALTIES FOR NONATTENDANCE
(Percentage of Centers)

	Overall	CCC	Primarily Residential	Significantly Nonresidential
Attendance Required After Completion of All Lessons	89	70	94	100
Level of Penalties Imposed for Missing an SST Session				
No/minimal penalty	23	13	26	29
Intermediate penalty	60	77	49	63
Incremental penalty	15	10	23	4

SOURCE: National Job Corps Study Center Mail Survey.

in the SST session, including a vocational instructor, a records clerk, and a store manager. One observer described the students in this session as "surprisingly attentive" in comparison to those observed during other site visits.

Most SST facilitators follow the curriculum closely. The sessions observers described as the most lively tended to be the ones that deviated the most from the standard curriculum. Those that followed the curriculum closely often appeared forced and unnatural.

RAs do not receive extensive training or feedback in their role as SST facilitators. While three-quarters of RAs interviewed said they received some type of training, it was sometimes little more than written and video instruction. Although counselors are required to observe SST and provide ongoing in-service assistance, this requirement did not appear to be uniformly met. In at least one-third of the centers visited, counselors did not routinely observe RAs. At some additional sites, counselors observed, but in a pro forma way: their observations were not used to improve the facilitation skills of the RAs.

2. Weaknesses in the SST Curriculum

Those who commented on the value of the SST program in place during our visit were divided in their assessments. There is general agreement that many students entering Job Corps have a real deficit in this area and need improvement. Thus, staff are positive in their support for the concept of SST. However, many staff were critical of the program as it existed in 1996 and 1997. Criticisms included the following:

- ***The curriculum content is too repetitive and simplistic.*** The curriculum was often described as "boring," "condescending," and "insulting." It was described as aimed at the lowest level of social skills found among students, rendering it inappropriate for many of the students.

- ***Students should be allowed to "test out" of the curriculum.*** Several staff commented that students with high levels of social skills or students who had completed the curriculum should be allowed to exit the program rather than be required to continue, often repeating lessons, until they graduate.

- ***The curriculum needs to be redesigned.*** Many staff expressed a desire for changes in the curriculum, with the primary changes being the addition of advanced lessons and sessions focusing directly on workplace social skills. Several staff members were optimistic that the emerging emphasis on school-to-work training would include a major modification of the SST curriculum to address employment-related social skills specifically. They hoped this would reduce the difficulties students face keeping the jobs they obtain after graduation.

Although we were not able to make a formal assessment of the reactions of staff or students to the newer curriculum, it appears that the first and last of the above criticisms have been addressed in the revised program. Students are still required to remain in the program while attending Job Corps, but the content of the training is no longer aimed at such an elementary level, and it has incorporated many elements directly tied to workplace behavior and relationships.

E. EVALUATION OF STUDENT PROGRESS

One of the most important elements of the residential living component is the evaluation of a student's progress. Each center must implement an evaluation system to ensure that every student reaches his or her potential while enrolled in the program, taking into account the student's individual educational, vocational, and social needs.

1. P/PEP Structure

The cornerstone of student evaluation is the Progress/Performance Evaluation Panel, or P/PEP. The purpose of this required panel is to assess student performance in all major program areas and guide the student in an ongoing self-assessment and goal-setting process. A student's assigned panel must include the following people:

- The individual student being evaluated
- The student's counselor
- An education instructor
- A vocational instructor
- An RA or SST training facilitator (for nonresidential students)

Preferably, the panel uses the student's own instructors and advisors/facilitators, but other representatives of these programs are also permitted to serve as panel members. The chair of the panel must be a staff member to whom the student is assigned; program guidelines recommend the student's counselor.

Between 30 and 45 days after the student arrives on center, panels convene for the first time to assess the student's initial adjustment to center life and to establish training and social goals. Thereafter, panels are required to meet every two months to review student progress and performance. Before each formal panel meeting, the student must meet with his current instructors and RA or SST facilitator to discuss progress and performance during the past two months. Each staff person rates the student on a variety of evaluation factors; these ratings become part of the permanent Student Performance Evaluation Record (SPER), which is forwarded to the chair of the panel.

After reviewing and discussing the student's evaluation record, the panel makes recommendations to the director regarding the student's training (course or schedule changes), social training performance, incentive awards, bonuses, and readiness to exit the program. When behavior or attendance problems are present, the panel can recommend that the student enter into a

performance contract (usually 30 days). The contract specifies behavioral changes required and consequences if the conditions of the contract are not met.

Panels are required to assess the overall performance of each student and make recommendations for cash bonuses. To be considered for a bonus, the student must, at a minimum, receive satisfactory ratings from evaluators in all program areas. The panel can take into account other factors besides evaluator ratings in deciding whether to recommend a bonus for that student to the center director.

Staff Involvement in the Panel. Although the Job Corps Policy and Requirements Handbook (PRH) requires the student's assigned counselor to participate in the evaluation panel, not all centers follow this guideline (Table VI.5). While virtually all contract centers (99 percent) assign the student's own counselor to the panels, CCC practices in this area are less uniform. Over a third of CCCs indicated that counselors besides the student's own counselor serve on the panel.

Similarly, centers use different approaches to staffing the other members of the panel. As shown, most centers rely on the student's own vocational instructors, as well as counselors, to staff the panels. CCCs place the most emphasis on involving the student's own vocational instructor in the evaluation process: 90 percent of CCCs use the student's instructor, compared to only 65 percent of primarily residential and 52 percent of significantly nonresidential centers. Inability to bring contracted vocational instructors into the P/PEP process is the main reason center directors gave for this group's reduced participation.

In contrast to vocational and counseling panel members, centers often fill the RA slot with a staff member who does not supervise the student directly. Only about half the centers are committed to using the student's own RA on the P/PEP panel. Throughout the system, even less emphasis is placed on filling the panel's slot for academic instructor with a current instructor: only 24 percent

TABLE VI.5

P/PEPs

	Overall	CCC	Primarily Residential	Significantly Nonresidential
Panel Membership (Percentage of Centers)				
Student's Counselor	89	63	100	96
Student's Vocational Instructor	69	90	65	52
Vocational Instructor from Same Trade	7	10	4	12
Student's Academic Instructor	24	7	33	24
Student's RA	49	45	54	41
RA from Same Dormitory	20	17	22	18
Students Perceive That "My P/PEP Panel Helps Me Set Realistic Goals" (Percentage of Students)				
Very True	50	45	48	57
Somewhat True	35	39	36	31
Not Very True	10	10	10	8
Not at All True	6	6	6	5

SOURCES: National Job Corps Study Center Mail Survey; Student Satisfaction Survey, June 1996.

of centers have a policy of using the student's own instructor; for CCCs, this figure drops to 7 percent.

Special P/PEP. When staff identify a student who is in trouble or struggling, they commonly recommend a special P/PEP session to address these problems and possibly consider termination. All but one of the sites visited hold special P/PEP sessions, which can be called at any time by staff or students. The special P/PEP is used primarily as an intervention tool for students who exhibit behavior, attendance, or performance problems. In addition, centers sometimes use the special P/PEP format to review student requests for changes in their vocational/academic schedule, to prepare students for termination, or to address special problems or needs.

Maximum Benefits System. As part of the overall student evaluation system, centers must also implement a "maximum benefits system" to ensure that each student "reaches his or her maximum potential while enrolled in the Job Corps program." Like the P/PEPs evaluation structure, the maximum benefits system must use a formal panel and must assess the student's progress in the academic, vocational, and social arenas.

In practice, the maximum benefits panel is called when a teacher recommends that a student be considered for termination. Unlike special P/PEP panels, which usually address motivational or behavioral problems, the maximum benefits panel is called for students who are unable to do the academic work. Examples cited during our staff interviews all involved students with very low basic skills or learning difficulties that had prevented them from completing their academic course of study.

Only a small fraction of Job Corps students participate in the maximum benefits process. In the previous year, most centers had terminated only a few students through this process. Some centers

had not terminated any students for months under maximum benefits provisions; a few centers did not have a formal panel process in place to assess maximum benefits issues.

Alternative P/PEC Structure. Some centers have obtained a waiver from the regional office to amend the P/PEP structure, replacing the panel format of the P/PEP with a counselor-student meeting, referred to as Progress and Performance Evaluation Counseling (P/PEC). Of the 23 sites visited, 4 had adopted the P/PEC structure. Under this format, the student still meets with individual instructors and the RA (or SST facilitator) prior to the P/PEC to go over the evaluation of his or her recent performance. In the follow-up formal meeting, the student discusses the evaluation with the counselor, instead of with the larger panel. Centers that have moved away from the panel cited the amount of time required for scheduling the P/PEPs as a major factor in their decision.

2. P/PEP Effectiveness

Staff are divided in their assessment of P/PEP effectiveness. Counselors, who usually chair the panel and have the greatest involvement in the process, are largely positive in their assessments. Most counseling staff interviewed feel that the panels constitute an effective system for monitoring student progress, providing feedback, and motivating students to perform. According to proponents of the system, the P/PEP's major strengths include bringing together the various program components into one forum, increasing interdepartmental communication, and evaluating the whole student. RAs support the P/PEP system for similar reasons.

However, other staff view the P/PEP process as less effective and more problematic. For example, in two-thirds of the staff focus groups, participants emphasized the need for revision and improvement of the P/PEP. Even among those groups who largely favor the P/PEP, participants want to see changes to make the system more effective. Multiple P/PEP-related issues emerged from the observations, interviews, and focus groups conducted during the site visits, as described next.

Implementation Problems. While defending the concept of P/PEPs, many interviewees and focus group participants find fault with the implementation. For example, staff describe the rating system used to evaluate student performance in the three major program areas (academic, vocational, social) as highly "subjective"--that is, either the rating criteria are unclear or staff do not consistently adhere to them. Some staff members are too severe, giving a less-than-satisfactory score even to a student who has complied with all the requirements for the period. Other staff members are very lenient.

Another problem is that panel members often have no direct personal connection to the student. A panel member who does not serve as the student's instructor or advisor is not necessarily familiar with the student's performance. This lack of connection with the student may contribute to staff taking a pro forma approach to the P/PEP, lessening its value as a process for engaging the student in self-assessment and goal-setting. A number of interviewees suggested that the true value of the P/PEPs resides in the pre-panel meetings students attend several days before. At these meetings, students interact one-on-one with their assigned RAs and instructors; staff have more flexibility to spend time discussing the evaluation and drawing students out.

On-site observations of P/PEPs confirmed that implementation varies considerably from center to center. At many centers, the panel's main functions are to formalize the evaluation findings of others, to reiterate goals for the student, and to take care of paperwork. The panel appears to hurry through the process, with little attempt to engage the student in useful discussion of performance and goals for the future. Sessions are frequently no longer than 10 minutes. At a few centers, the panel members engage the students on a more personal level and are less paperwork-oriented. They spend more time asking students questions and involving them in the evaluation and goal-setting process.

Cumbersome Administrative Structure. Staff critical of P/PEPs also question its basic structure, primarily because of the administrative burdens it imposes. Many experience difficulties in scheduling the panels and find the administrative requirements of the panels too time-consuming (for example, too much paperwork and too many people to coordinate effectively). For these reasons, several sites have moved away from the P/PEP to the more streamlined P/PEC. Staff at these centers generally report that they are happy with the new structure. They believe that what they have sacrificed in abandoning the full panel is rewarded by a reduction in both staff time commitments and scheduling difficulties. A few directors also stated that counselors are generally able to spend more time with each student under the P/PEC structure.

The new structure has its detractors, however. At one center, the RAs were less enthusiastic about P/PECs because they now had fewer formal linkages with other staff. While they did not advocate a return to the P/PEP structure, they felt that it was important that RAs remain involved in the student assessment process. Directors at a few centers using the P/PEC structure were also concerned about losing a team approach to evaluating students and were less convinced of the advantages of the new approach.

Problems with the Bonus System. Sizable numbers of staff criticize the bonus rating system attached to the P/PEP (or P/PEC). They feel that bonuses either are too easy to obtain or are awarded to students inconsistently. As mentioned above, eligibility for bonuses is based strictly on the evaluation scores of instructors and RAs. However, many staff believe that these scores do not truly reflect the student's performance, because staff use such different criteria for the scoring.

Moreover, many staff expressed concerns about the restriction of giving bonuses to no more than 35 percent of students. Specifically, during any given evaluation period, if a higher percentage of students qualify, some deserving students do not receive the bonus. At a number of centers,

students routinely meet or exceed the minimum evaluation score needed but do not receive a bonus. As a result, many students and staff at these centers perceive the system as unfair. Several centers have recently addressed this issue by revising their scoring system to make qualification for a bonus more difficult.

Student Perception of the Usefulness of P/PEPs. The Job Corps quarterly student survey includes a question about students' view of the utility of P/PEPs in helping them set goals (Table VI.5). Students were asked to indicate their agreement with the statement "My P/PEP panel helps me set realistic goals." Overall, students do feel that P/PEP panels are of use to them in setting realistic goals. Eighty-five percent of students responding to the June 1996 survey answered "very true" or "somewhat true" to this statement. Favorable assessments were more common among students at centers run by private contractors and at those with significant nonresidential components.

F. INTERGROUP RELATIONS (IGR)

The IGR program is designed to reduce prejudice, prevent discriminatory behavior, and increase understanding among racial/ethnic groups and between men and women. The program includes three phases: Phase I, a short introduction during new-student orientation, varying in duration from 1 to 4 hours; Phase II, a cultural-awareness course, consisting of approximately 15 hours of classroom instruction, taught after students have been on center for a few weeks; and Phase III, monthly centerwide cultural events. Some centers supplement the standard curriculum with additional material such as videos, maps, films, outside speakers, and information about the local cultural history. Phase I and II activities are mandatory at all centers. Phase III activities are mandatory at some centers but voluntary at others.

All but one of the centers visited has an IGR committee responsible for planning the ongoing cultural events that make up Phase III of the program. At most centers, staff are chosen to represent various departments and serve a specified term (usually six months to two years), but a few operate on an entirely volunteer basis with no term limits. Students on the committee are generally selected to represent their dormitory, but at one center they are selected to represent a cultural group. In another center, students were not included at all on the committee. The size of IGR committees ranges from a handful of members to several dozen. Committees meet monthly or more often at some centers but only occasionally at others.

At least one planned event is required each month. Eight months of the year, there are preplanned activities specified in Job Corps, usually centered on a cultural group or a nationally recognized holiday or celebration. For example, Black History month is the topic of one of these activities. For the remaining four months, the committee is free to develop programs of specific interest to the student population at that center. Examples include: Native American programs, a Thanksgiving dance and candlelight dinner, Arbor Day to take care of the environment, International Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, LBJ birthday, Cinco de Mayo celebration, Hawaiian Luau, Christmas giving programs, comparative religion events, and field days. Most staff indicated that the cultural events are well received and well attended by students. Popular events focus on ethnic foods or music. Professional entertainers and competitive events with prizes available were also described as big draws. One staff member commented that students tend to prefer events that celebrate their own cultural backgrounds.

G. RECREATION

The recreation component of the Job Corps experience is believed to be very important in retaining students in Job Corps, especially residential students. It also contributes to the larger goals

of Job Corps on a number of dimensions. The goals of the recreation program, as described by the staff, are to:

- Promote social skills
- Promote team-building
- Provide a structure and an outlet for leisure time
- Keep students happy
- Promote wellness
- Reinforce the behavioral management system on center

All centers have some type of recreation program. Recreation programs include a mix of structured activities (such as team sports and fitness classes) and unstructured activities (such as open hours at a gym, activity center, or TV room). Cultural events are also an important part of the recreation program at many centers. While many of the cultural activities involve trips off center, a few are held on center, such as an international club for foreign students, movies, and an African dance club.

Recreation programs vary considerably across centers, ranging from very small, with only a few facilities and structured activities, to very large, with many activities and a wide array of athletic fields, gyms, swimming pools, and game rooms that serve both students and the wider community. The quality of the facilities also varies. For example, some gymnasiums are so small that there is no room for spectators, while other facilities are spacious.

During the site visits, it was evident that some staff and students are pleased with the recreational opportunities available at their center, while at others the recreation program is a major focus of complaints. At centers with limited recreational opportunities, students clearly expressed

feelings of having been misled by OA counselors. Their disappointment when what they found did not meet their expectations was clearly and loudly articulated in the focus groups.

On-Center Facilities. Facilities that are available on center offer students daily recreational opportunities. Most Job Corps centers have space for arts and crafts, a game room, a TV room, a gymnasium, athletic fields, and a library (Table VI.6). Approximately one-third of the centers have a swimming pool. Recreation facilities are generally more extensive at rural centers (not shown), at CCCs, and at centers with predominantly residential students.

A few centers offer separate facilities or classes for women, including weight rooms and aerobics classes. Staff told us that these separate facilities were a recent change, in response to low participation rates from women and feedback women provided about what would encourage greater use.

Off-Center Facilities. Nearly all centers (98 percent) use community recreational facilities to supplement what is available on center. These are generally not as accessible as on-center facilities. Community facilities commonly used by Job Corps centers include swimming pools, athletic fields, community gyms, and community recreation centers. Use of these community facilities is highest among those centers that lack these resources, many of which are located in urban areas. At rural centers, field trips to make use of off-center facilities require a greater degree of planning and more extensive travel. Other supplemental facilities commonly used off center include skating, bowling, horseback riding, and miniature golf. Many centers are involved in community leagues in sports such as basketball, softball, and swimming, whereas other centers rely entirely on intramural team sports. Off-center facilities are also used to supplement the cultural activities available on center**.** These include movies, theater, concerts, museums, and visits to historical sites. At many centers,

TABLE VI.6

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES
(Percentage of Centers)

	Overall	CCC	Primarily Residential	Significantly Nonresidential
On Center				
Gymnasium	90	97	91	81
Athletic fields or courts	88	100	91	69
Swimming pool	31	23	33	35
Space for arts and crafts	99	100	100	96
Game room	97	100	100	89
TV room	96	100	96	92
Library	84	77	91	77

SOURCE: National Job Corps Study Center Mail Survey.

field trips and other off-center activities are available only to students who are in advanced phases and thus serve to reward students for good performance.

Recreation Staffing. The staff of the recreation programs includes managers, specialists, assistants, and a variety of student aides. Some centers supplement Job Corps staff with community expertise in such areas as martial arts and aerobics instruction, volunteer coaches for team sports, and entertainers for special events. Outside staff resources used for special events on center include DJs or musicians for dances, and clowns and balloon artists for carnivals. Some centers report difficulty attracting and retaining recreation staff. Several managerial positions in the recreation program were vacant at the time of the site visits.

Students participate in the recreation program as student aides. To serve as an aide, students must be in good standing and must receive basic leadership training. At a few centers, students are paid or receive vouchers at the student store. At other centers, the positions are unpaid but students receive extra privileges in exchange for their services. Student government gets involved in planning recreation activities. The level of input of students into the design of the recreation program appears to vary from minimal to very active.

Participation of Students. Participation in events varies from center to center. Some centers report high levels of student participation, while others report low levels. Game rooms, TV rooms, and other on-center facilities tend to be heavily used. Some team sports are very popular and have high levels of organized participation. However, at other centers, staff reported that they have ceased to offer some sports because of lack of interest. Results of the mail survey show that most residential students participate in at least one regularly scheduled center-organized recreational activity in a typical week. Participation rates below 30 percent for residential students were reported by fewer than 10 percent of the centers; rates exceeding 80 percent were reported by more than one-quarter

of the centers. Male residential students participate in organized activities at higher rates than do female residential students. A full 82 percent of centers reported weekly participation rates of over 60 percent for male residential students. For female residential students, only 61 percent of the centers reported participation rates that high.

Nonresidential students participate in organized activities at lower rates than do residential students, with 50 percent of the centers reporting weekly participation rates at 10 percent or below. Outside commitments and transportation difficulties are major reasons for low rates of participation.

A number of features of recreation programs appear to influence participation levels:

- ***Extent and Variety of Facilities and Staff.*** If few facilities are available to students, participation levels tend to be low. Lack of facilities can also lead to scheduling difficulties, with few options at any given time. Where gymnasiums and athletic fields are in short supply or entirely absent, this poses a real difficulty for centers. Closely related to adequacy of facilities is the level of staffing. If too few staff are available, the facilities may not be able to accommodate as many students as they otherwise could.

- ***Staff Devotion.*** The level of enthusiasm evident among staff, and their commitment to making programs accessible and fun for students, appears to influence participation levels greatly. Creating access for students after classes as opposed to waiting until after dinner also appears to make a difference. One center told us they had recently begun to open the facilities at the end of the training day instead of waiting until later in the evening. This provided students with a constructive outlet at a time of day when they had tended to get into trouble in the local community.

- ***Level of Student Input.*** Closely related to staff devotion, recreation programs that reach out to students to find out their interests and to adjust recreational opportunities to fit student demand are more successful in generating high participation levels.

- ***Quality of the Facilities.*** Participation levels are influenced not only by the availability of recreational facilities but also by the quality of those facilities. For example, at some centers the use of the gymnasium is limited by a lack of room for spectators or a lack of air conditioning, which renders the facility essentially unusable for large parts of the year.

- ***Required Participation.*** One center told us that they require students to participate in recreational programs on a weekly basis. At this center, students are required to participate in at least one arts-and-crafts project and one cultural activity, as well as spend two hours in a group activity and four hours in an individual activity. This center

reported high participation levels and was the only center that indicated that recreational participation was addressed during P/PEPs.

- ***Effort to Include Nonresidential Students.*** Most (but not all) centers reported low levels of participation by nonresidential students. Some centers, however, obtain high participation levels for nonresidential students by supplying transportation when needed and providing programs specifically designed to appeal to nonresidential students. Responding to feedback from students about the programs they want was mentioned as an important element in successfully engaging students.

- ***Effort to Create Environments Conducive to Female Participation.*** A few centers have directly addressed lower female participation rates by creating specialized facilities for female students or reserving a few hours per week for female-only use.

- ***Level of Structure.*** Many of the most popular recreational activities require organization and structure. These include team sports and trips off center. Programs that rely on unstructured activities may get a lot of participation in a few activities (games, TV) but appear less likely to engage students in those activities that are most likely to contribute to the stated goals of the recreation program.

H. STUDENT GOVERNMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Centers foster student leadership through student government and through structured leadership training programs. Leadership skills are an important part of the social development that Job Corps provides to students. The programs seek to instill pride and positive attitudes; teach communication skills, group dynamics, and parliamentary procedures; and build self-esteem. These programs also provide important opportunities for student input into the residential living component of Job Corps.

1. Student Government

Administrative guidelines require each center to establish "with maximum student participation" some form of elected student government, often referred to as the Student Government Association, or SGA. At a minimum, the SGA structure must include a council composed both of elected members representing each dorm and of nonresidential students. All students, including nonresidential ones, can vote for student representatives on the council, but not all students are

eligible to hold office. To be eligible, candidates must complete a leadership training course (described later in this section) and maintain a good behavior record. Some centers also impose a minimum length of stay and other requirements on students seeking to participate in student government. Officers are usually selected either by the student body as a whole or by other council members. The center assigns a staff advisor to provide guidance to the SGA, which must meet at least every two weeks.

The main purpose of student government is to provide students with a voice in how the center is run. The SGA is supposed to have direct access to and meet with the center director regularly to discuss the issues and concerns of the student body. Student leaders from the SGA are typically assigned to various center committees or to individual staff involved with the following programmatic areas:

- Orientation programs
- Recreation programs
- Behavior management
- Food service and snack bar operations
- Student or dorm courts
- Community relations
- Intergroup relations programs
- Center safety programs

Student Welfare Association. Student government is also responsible for operating a student welfare association, which manages profits derived from center canteens, vending machines, pay phones, student fines, and student fundraisers. In consultation with other students, the association

recommends how these funds should be spent for the benefit of students. The funds available can be considerable: centers reported that the welfare association has as much as several thousand dollars in monthly income. The funds are used primarily to sponsor center social events, student trips, and student welfare programs (such as student loans and scholarships). Some centers also use funds to support center club activities, while others purchase electronic and recreational equipment.

Variation in Structure and Operations. Several variations on the basic governance structure outlined above were encountered during the site visits. Eligibility screening is one source of variation. At one end of the spectrum, some centers stipulate that students, to be eligible for student government, must have been on center 90 days, achieved a certain "phase level" within the center's incentive system, received a certain P/PEP score, and obtained written approval from several staff. Centers with minimal entry requirements ask only that students be on center for 30 days and have a clean record and may require only that candidates sign up for a leadership course rather than complete the course prior to election time.

Another source of variation is the level of involvement in the behavior management system (BMS). Most SGAs are active in the BMS through participation both on the Center Review Board (CRB) and on student courts. All centers appear to have at least one student representative on the CRB. The level of involvement on student courts is less consistent. At most centers, SGA leaders also staff student or dorm courts. However, at several centers the SGAs have no apparent involvement in dorm court discipline. At these centers, dorm courts either do not exist or function as an independent structure set up through the dorms.

The level of interaction with management is a third source of variation. At some centers, SGA members meet only once a month (or less frequently) with the center director and the scope of the meeting appears limited. For example, at one center the meeting is simply a one-on-one conference

between the center director and the SGA president to go over minutes from the previous SGA meeting. At other centers, the meetings are more frequent, sometimes even weekly, and the purpose is more clearly to have an open, direct exchange of ideas between students and management. In a few centers, student representatives also participate in management team meetings; however, most interviewees did not emphasize regular and direct contact with the management team as a whole.

Most welfare associations confine themselves to overseeing the funds generated by vending machines and canteen/snack bar concessions. Students are frequently employed by the concessions but contractors provide the management of the operation. Only a few welfare associations play a larger role in hiring staff, stocking the store, or managing other aspects of the concessions operation. The student government at some centers directly supports student clubs by earmarking a portion of welfare association funds for club operation. A few centers have a variety of active clubs, but many appear to have few or no student organizations beyond the SGA.

Most important, the level of influence that students feel they have on the residential living component of Job Corps appears to vary. About one-half of the SGA advisors interviewed feel that student government plays an influential role in center decision-making. A substantial minority of advisors, however, characterize the SGA's role and influence as limited. Student government is involved in formal center evaluation in only a few centers.

Assessment of Student Government's Role. Most SGA advisors feel that SGA structure is effective in providing students a voice on center, enhancing leadership skills, and connecting students in positive ways to the outside world. For example, a number of interviewees highlighted the benefits of community service projects that SGA members participate in or help organize. Only one advisor mentioned difficulties with involving nonresidential students in SGA. At most centers, student representatives sit on a full range of committees but appear to be most active and influential

in four main areas: student orientation, student discipline, recreation and social-event planning, and food service.

Advisors who characterize student government as less active or effective cite the following shortcomings:

- ***Difficulty Maintaining Student Interest.*** A sizable minority of advisors describe difficulties in sustaining student interest and participation in student government. For example, some sites experience problems with student representatives' attendance at meetings. In at least a few sites, the student government or the student welfare associations have become inactive for periods of time. Some advisors believe that the center needs to establish stronger incentives for student government participation. Some centers do have clear incentives, such as linking involvement in student government to dorm privileges and perks or to driver's licenses.

- ***Need for Students to Have a Greater Voice.*** Some advisors feel that center management and staff do not give students the independence and organizational support they need to be effective. One center, for example, handpicks student council members, instead of permitting dorms to vote on candidates.

- ***Need for More Leadership Training.*** As described next, leadership training is a prerequisite for holding different leadership positions, including student government offices. Some advisors feel that students need intensive or ongoing training if the skills and effectiveness of student leaders are to be improved.

2. Leadership Training

To prepare students for student government and other responsibilities on center, all centers must establish a structured leadership-training course. At a minimum, the course must cover the objectives of Job Corps, principles of leadership, and human relations. However, centers commonly include additional topics, such as communication skills, conflict resolution, and team-building. Most centers also break the course components into two or more phases consisting of core training and advanced coursework. All the centers we visited require students to take core or even advanced training before becoming a dorm leader, student aide, or member of student government. In about half the centers, counseling staff or training specialists conduct the course, while in the others

recreation staff, RAs, education instructors, and management staff from various departments are responsible for the training.

Program Variation. Centers have wide latitude in the implementation of the leadership program and exhibit considerable variation in the level of training provided and the number and type of student selected to participate. The training course varies in length from as little as 3 hours to as many as 20, with most centers providing between 10 to 15 hours of training. Some centers offer intensive training, covering the course in under a week, but most offer the training in one-to-two-hour segments stretched out over many weeks.

A minority of centers require all students to take the initial course segments, and one center indicated that this training takes place during orientation. Students then elect to receive further training, subject to eligibility requirements. At most centers, however, only students who volunteer, or who are nominated and recruited by staff, participate in any of the training. In this context, the training is designed to funnel students into student leadership roles rather than to provide a general leadership-training experience for all students. Centers frequently require extra training in parliamentary procedures and other subjects for students contemplating running for student government. Variation in eligibility requirements may depend, in part, on the importance attached to having experienced student leaders and on the center's need to fill leadership vacancies.

Issues and Recommendations. Staff members involved in leadership training are generally committed to the program and positive about its benefits both for the center and for the individual students. However, they raise several issues:

- ***Expansion of the Curriculum.*** The most common suggestion for improving leadership training is to increase the hours of training and to add curriculum components beyond what is required. Interviewees mentioned team-building, community service, and other "hands-on" activities as things they would like to see incorporated into the program.

- ***Participation of Nonresidential Students.*** The special needs and status of nonresidential students is another issue. Some centers have changed the training time to midafternoon in order to accommodate nonresidents. One center mentioned lack of transportation for nonresidents as a potential issue. At several other centers, nonresident students either do not participate in training or take a scaled-back version of the training.

I. BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

The BMS is an essential element of each center's residential life program. There are three basic systems for managing student behavior: a disciplinary system, an incentive system, and the student evaluation system (P/PEP or P/PEC). Additional components of the system include student participation in the BMS through student government councils or dorm courts, a center standards officer to oversee the BMS, and a center review board to hear disciplinary discharge cases. P/PEPs were discussed in Section E; this section addresses the other components of the BMS.

Disciplinary System. The key elements of the disciplinary system are clearly articulated rules and sanctions and a process for determining appropriate sanctions. Centers can apply a range of sanctions in response to infractions of the rules, from a reprimand (for less serious infractions of the rules) to expulsion (for serious offenses). Intermediate sanctions include small fines, extra work assignments, and loss of privileges. The two main requirements are that sanctions be appropriate to the student's offense and that they be consistently applied. Centers typically inform students of center rules and expectations during pre-orientation contacts prior to the students' arrival. All sites publish center rules and sanctions in a student handbook, which they present to all new students upon arrival. In addition, most centers emphasize the center's system of rules and sanctions on the first day of orientation and again in initial counseling and dorm meetings. Students do feel that the center rules have been clearly explained to them.

As described earlier, in program year 1995, Job Corps introduced an expanded "zero-tolerance" policy requiring centers to expel a student for engaging in any violence or drug or alcohol use on

center. In addition, the new policies dictated a 30-day probationary period for students (since revised to 45 days); those who test positive for drugs at the end of the probationary period are supposed to be sent home. Previously, centers had greater discretion in dealing with serious rule violations; some had adopted a lenient policy, allowing for multiple offenses before a student was expelled.

Incentive System. Program guidelines also require each center to establish an incentive system for all students. At a minimum, a center's incentives must include merit increases in allowances and awards for achievement and other positive behaviors. In addition to awards and pay incentives, students can receive bonus pay through the P/PEP process as described earlier.

Almost all centers (96 percent) have some form of incentives in place. At least half have established elaborate and highly visible "phase systems" for rewarding positive student behavior. Students who attend classes, obey center rules, participate in activities, and display other positive behaviors pass through different phases. With each successive phase, students receive awards, small prizes, greater freedom, and privileges and special perks, such as fewer roommates and larger dorm rooms. Through negative conduct, students also risk being demoted to an earlier phase.

Student or Dorm Courts. With the guidance of a staff advisor, student courts (often referred to as dorm courts) handle minor rule infractions, as defined by the center's student handbook. A few centers also involve students in formal mediation as an alternative way to handle disputes between students, but this does not appear to be a common practice. The student court, composed of elected representatives from each dorm, has the authority to determine disciplinary action for students who come before it. A student who disputes the sanctions imposed by his or her peers has the right to appeal the court's decision to the Center Standards Officer (see below).

Center Standards Officer (CSO) and Center Review Board (CRB). Appointed by the director, the CSO administers the BMS and is responsible for disciplinary actions on center. The

CSO reviews the actions of the student courts and hears appeals. The CSO also conducts investigations of more serious charges against students. When warranted, the CSO recommends a disciplinary discharge of a student to the CRB, whose five members are appointed by the director. The CRB conducts hearings and makes recommendations on disciplinary discharges to the director, who has the final say.

1. Effectiveness of the BMS

Almost all center directors and staff judge their center's BMS to be moderately effective to very effective. Interviewees agreed that a number of factors contributed to the effectiveness of the BMS, as described next.

Use of Incentives. Incentives were one of the most frequently mentioned aspects of the BMS. Most CSOs we interviewed, as well as many counselors, RAs, and security staff, emphasize the importance of incentives and rewards for good behavior as critical components of the BMS. In those systems perceived to be functioning well, staff point to the use of incentives as the major factor. Conversely, in systems that are perceived to be less effective, interviewees feel that adequate incentives are lacking. Security staff and CSOs clearly and consistently articulated the relationship between a *systematic* use of incentives (the phase system) and overall effectiveness of the BMS. Several centers indicated that they are instituting a more comprehensive "phase system" to strengthen the incentive aspect of the BMS.

Significantly, nonresidential centers face a greater challenge in developing an incentive-based system that works well for nonresidential students. Many of the incentives for good behavior are oriented toward allowing students greater privileges and center-based perks and therefore are not as applicable to the lives of nonresidential students.

Student Involvement with the BMS. Many staff believe that student involvement in the BMS is a key element in the overall effectiveness of the system. Staff define student involvement in the BMS in informal as well as formal terms. Formal student participation includes serving on the CRB, on dorm courts, as peer mediators, and as dorm leaders. In addition, student government representatives routinely sit on staff behavior management committees or meet with the CSO. Most centers believe that student leaders have an influential voice through these structures. Staff also describe informal participation of students through positive role modeling and peer pressure. In an effective system, students "buy into" the rules, monitor each other's behaviors, and resolve problems informally before they escalate to the point where staff need to be involved.

Staff Involvement in BMS. Another common theme to emerge from center interviews and focus groups concerned staff involvement in the BMS. A number of counselors, RAs, and security staff view broad-based staff enforcement of center rules as a critical element contributing to the overall effectiveness of the BMS. Virtually all centers (96 percent) consider the disciplining of students to be a responsibility shared by the entire staff. However, in practice, only a few CSOs describe their staff participation rate as high. Almost two-thirds of CSOs report that a percentage of their staff is reluctant to confront rule-breaking students and correct their behavior. Some staff "look the other way" when students are misbehaving; others choose to write up the student (submit a written report to the CSO for investigation), but without directly confronting the student or discussing the problem at the time of the infraction. CSOs see this response as a missed opportunity to work with the student, believing that such writeups are not as effective as personal contact in modifying the behavior.

Another common issue raised about the BMS by both students and staff is lack of consistent enforcement of everyday rules. The reason frequently given for inconsistent enforcement is that not

all staff interpret the disciplinary rules in the same way. Some staff might choose to talk with a student to problem-solve while, for the same behavior, others might give the student a writeup, which leads to a penalty. Staff perspectives on this issue reflect two distinct camps: those who feel enforcement is generally too lax and penalties too mild and those who find their colleagues too harsh and too ready to use negative sanctions. In many focus groups, staff expressed concerns that inconsistent enforcement translates into unfair treatment of students. Moreover, students receive a mixed message because they do not always see a uniform consequence resulting from certain behaviors.

2. Assessment of Zero Tolerance (ZT)

CSO and security staff are universally in favor of the new ZT policy. In interviews, over two-thirds offered specific examples of how life had improved on center since the implementation of ZT. While not quite as unanimous in their support and enthusiasm, other staff are also generally positive in their assessments of ZT, for a variety of reasons. Many credit the ZT policy with reducing violence, curbing both drugs and alcohol on center, and improving the learning environment. Moreover, prior to ZT, administrative regulations made the process of expelling a disruptive student from the center more difficult and time-consuming. Staff also believe that ZT helps create a better student pool because more students who drink and use drugs now self-select out of the program, while focused students self-select in. Data from negative incident reports, described in Chapter VII, support this view.

Need for Greater Flexibility. While most other staff (counseling staff, RAs, instructors, administrators) applaud the benefits of ZT, they also raised concerns about its inflexibility. In focus groups, for example, staff questioned the current implementation of ZT as it applies to substance abuse. Concerns centered largely on the need for greater flexibility in applying ZT to students with

drug problems. In many groups, a consensus emerged that 30 days is an insufficient probation period: the universal application of a 30-day trial forecloses opportunities for staff to work with students who have the potential to be successful in Job Corps but need more time to become drug free. In October 1997, the period was changed from 30 days to 45 days in response.

Inconsistent Application of ZT. Centers are not entirely uniform in their implementation of the ZT policy. For example, about one-third of the centers do not adhere to true zero tolerance with regard to alcohol. At these centers, staff are afforded more flexibility in terminating students with an alcohol-related violation. Some centers allow up to three alcohol-related violations before termination. In addition, at some centers staff report that ZT policies for violence are difficult to interpret and implement consistently and fairly. Moreover, as described in Chapter IX, students who are likely to contribute to center performance outcomes are more likely to be given the benefit of the doubt in a ZT-related charge and retained.

Student Perception of Discipline System. The Job Corps quarterly student survey includes a question relating to the discipline system on center. Students are asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement "The center discipline system is fair." In June 1996, students were mixed in their assessment of the fairness of the discipline system (Table VI.7). While most students indicated agreement with the statement (68 percent overall responded "very true" or "somewhat true"), fewer than half of these (only 31 percent overall) responded "very true." Students attending centers with a significant proportion of nonresidential students perceive that the system is fairer than do students at either CCCs or primarily residential contract centers.

J. HEALTH SERVICES

Health services are an important support for students. The ability of students to benefit from the Job Corps program depends, in part, upon their health and safety. This includes both ensuring

TABLE VI.7

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF DISCIPLINE SYSTEM
(Percentage of Centers)

	Overall	CCC	Primarily Residential	Significantly Nonresidential
The Center Discipline System Is Fair				
Very true	31	27	29	43
Somewhat true	37	40	38	32
Not very true	18	19	19	14
Not at all true	14	15	15	11

SOURCE: Student Satisfaction Survey, June 1996.

that students entering the program are healthy and fit to pursue their academic and vocational goals and maintaining their health during their tenure on center. Initial health screening to ensure that students meet medical eligibility requirements is conducted by the screening agency prior to acceptance into the Job Corps program. The Job Corps Health Questionnaire (ETA 653) and the Supplemental Medical Consent Form must be individually administered to each applicant during the screening interview. All health information provided by the applicant must be received on center five days prior to the applicant's arrival, and most centers indicated that they do receive the paperwork in a timely fashion. In addition, residential students are required to sign a Supplemental Consent Form for HIV Testing. If accepted, students are required to submit to a medical examination, including a blood test for HIV, within two weeks after their arrival on center.

To be eligible under the Job Corps medical criterion, an applicant must be free of any health condition (medical, psychological, or dental) that (1) represents a potentially serious hazard to the youth or others, (2) results in significant interference in the normal performance of Job Corps duties, or (3) requires intensive or costly treatment not normally available through the Job Corps medical program (PRH-6, July 1990). Otherwise-qualified handicapped applicants are reviewed by the regional office for final acceptance and, if necessary, assignment to a designated center that is accessible and can provide reasonable accommodation.

Health Services Offered. All centers are required to offer basic medical services to students on center, including:

- Routine medical, dental, and mental health care
- Daily sick call or open appointment system and any necessary specialist referrals and consultations
- Access to emergency medical, dental, and mental health care on a 24-hour basis
- Health education program

In addition to these standard requirements, some centers offer additional services, including optometry, physical therapy, pharmacy, minor surgery, ob-gyn, and medication management for mental health problems. Others contract with these or other specialty services off center.

Medical terminations are not common, but they do occur for females in their seventh month of pregnancy, for serious injuries, for failure to submit to required tests, or for mental health conditions that the center cannot treat. Students have no right of appeal for medical terminations at some centers, but at others they do (although they rarely use it). Students may be allowed to re-enter the program once the problem is addressed.

Student Ailments. According to health services staff, common health complaints from students include:

- Seasonal complaints (colds, allergies, upper-respiratory infections)
- Sport-related injuries
- Stress-related pains (headaches, stomach aches)
- Depression

Some centers also commented that they try to address, through organized programs or individual treatment, problems students tend to have with obesity, smoking, and dental health. Many staff indicated that Job Corps could improve the wellness programs offered. Staff also commented that depression is a growing medical concern among students and that some students arrive on center already on medication for depression.

AODA Program. Job Corps centers employ counselors who specialize in alcohol and other drugs of abuse (AODA). When students first arrive on center, they are required to take a drug test. If they test positive, they must attend the AODA program. Other students may participate

voluntarily. During the first four weeks on center, the AODA specialists conduct group sessions with at-risk students, supplemented with individual sessions as needed.

With the implementation of a probationary period, the role of AODA specialists underwent a dramatic change. Although the probationary period was extended from 30 to 45 days in October 1997, the 30-day period was in effect at the time of our site visits. Therefore, staff reactions reported here are based on the 30-day period. We have not had the opportunity to observe the effects on the AODA program of the later increase to 45 days.

After the new 30-day policy went into effect, fewer students who use drugs enrolled, both because they self-select out of Job Corps and because OA counselors changed their approach to screening for drug use. In addition, students that continue to have a problem are terminated within the first 30 days. Before the change in policy, AODA counselors had the authority to decide which students they should continue to work with and which should be terminated. This authority had been largely eliminated at the time of our visits.

Many Job Corps center staff believe that both drug and alcohol use has declined in response to the policy change. The number of positive tests among new students is still high at many centers (staff reported from 25 percent to 50 percent), although at some centers this represents a reduction over positive test rates obtained prior to the new policy. However, some staff are concerned that drug and alcohol use may have gone underground to some extent. Few suggested that drug or alcohol use was a problem on center (a clear ZT violation), but off-center use does occur.

The role of the AODA program in addressing alcohol use may have suffered from the new ZT policy. The concern is that in cases where use is suspected, staff and fellow students are now more reluctant to refer students to the AODA program knowing that the consequence might be termination rather than treatment. Similarly, students with substance abuse problems may be less likely to come

forward for treatment. One RA commented that alcohol use may have increased as a result of the collapse of the AODA at the same time that other drug use has declined. Alcohol use may have simply moved underground instead of being eliminated.